

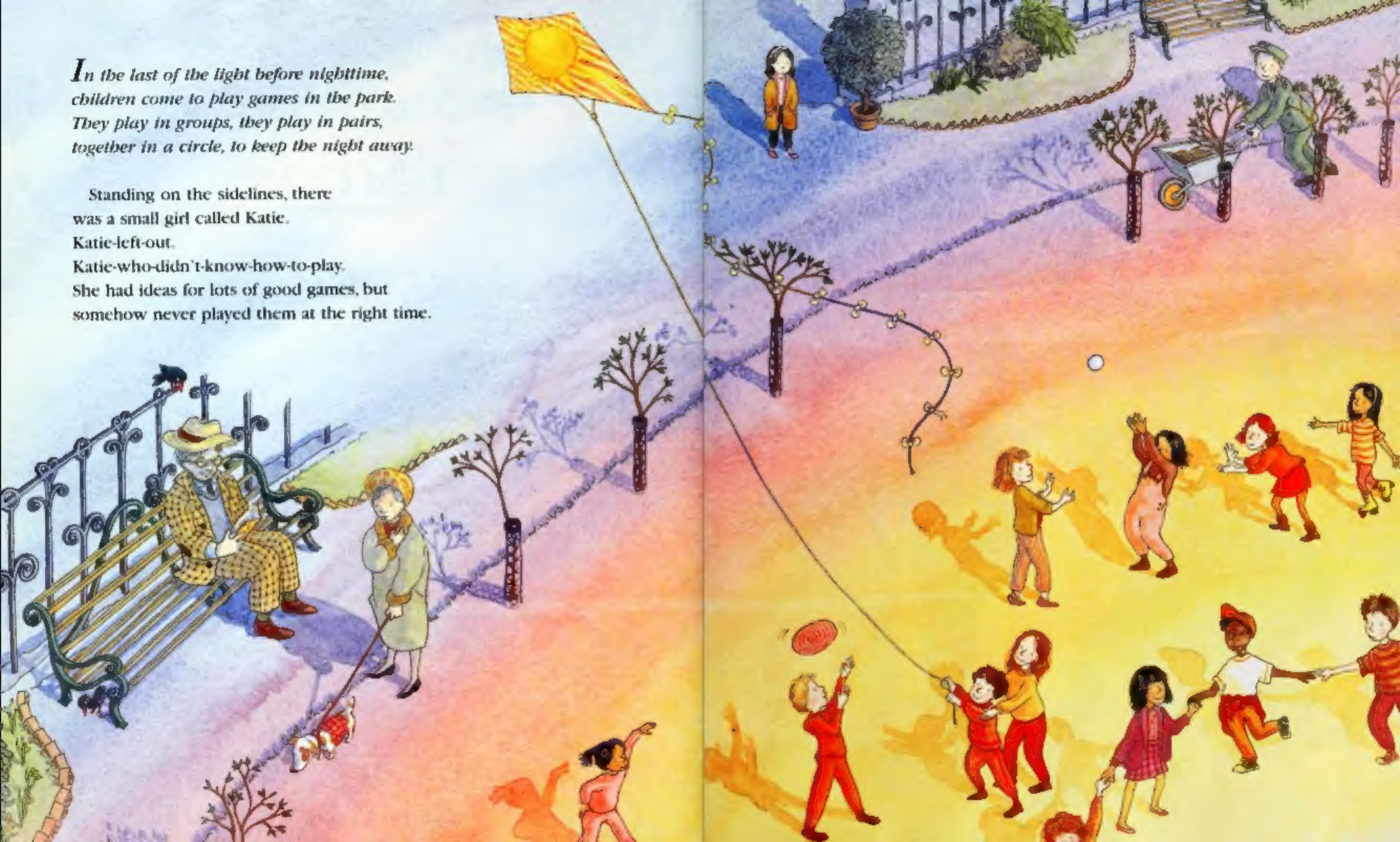
The Snowchild



Debi Gliori

*In the last of the light before nighttime,
children come to play games in the park.
They play in groups, they play in pairs,
together in a circle, to keep the night away.*

Standing on the sidelines, there
was a small girl called Katie.
Katie-left-out.
Katie-who-didn't-know-how-to-play.
She had ideas for lots of good games, but
somehow never played them at the right time.





In the early spring, when afternoon
rain left the streets shiny-bright,
Katie appeared with
a newspaper boat.

"Let's sail this in a puddle,"
she said.

The other children stared at her.




"But we're playing shipwrecks,"
said Ruth, stamping so hard
that a muddy wave sank Katie's boat.

Everyone ran off,
jumping and splashing,
trying to soak one another.

Katie walked home alone.





By summer the streets were dusty
and tired. Everyone played
in the leafy shade by the pond
in the park.

Katie arrived with a basket and began to
fill it with pebbles.

"Let's play shipwrecks," she said.

The other children looked at her in dismay.

"But we're playing piggy-in-the-middle," said Tim.
He grabbed Katie's basket, tipping out
the pebbles, and threw it in the water.
The basket floated away across the pond.

Katie fished out her basket
and walked home alone.

Autumn came, and the trees in the park turned gold.
The children played there, scattering leaves as they ran.

When Katie saw all the children, she picked up a ball
that was rolling on the fallen leaves.

"Let's play piggy-in-the-middle," she said.

Bennet's baby brother Nick burst into tears.

"Give that ball back to my little brother!"
yelled Bennet.

Katie dropped the ball and ran home crying.
All she wanted was to join in. All she wanted
was to be part of the circle.




Winter came, and Katie
was lonelier than ever.
It was too cold to play
outside, and no one
invited Katie over
to play.



One morning Katie woke up early,
and at once she knew that something
had changed. Bright light was shining
into her bedroom, and it was quiet
and still outside.


When Katie looked out her window,
she saw that the city was covered with snow,
deep, white snow.






Katie knew exactly what to do.
She put on her warmest clothes
and ran to the park.


There she heard the sound of
children playing.



She saw Bennet
whizzing down
a slope on his sled.



She saw Tim
wobbling downhill
on his skis.



She saw Ruth making snow angels
by the pond.

Katie sighed a little and walked on until she found an untouched patch of perfect snow, and there she started to make a snowman.



She made a little snowball, and then she patted on more snow until it was big enough to roll on the ground, round and round, till the snowball came up to her tummy. That was the snowman's body.



Then Katie made a smaller ball for the snowman's head. She carefully lifted the head onto the body and stood back to admire it.

The snowman was very small, not really as big as a man at all.



"I know what you are," said Katie. "You're a snowchild! But poor you, you haven't any eyes or even a smile, and you must be frozen without a hat. Wait here, and I'll run home and find some things for you."





Katie rushed home and started to fill a basket for her snowchild. He'll need these, she thought, picking up some coal in the garden shed—and a carrot from the kitchen, too.



She found a hat under Mom and Dad's bed and a very warm scarf on the chair in her bedroom. Then she rushed outside again.



She ran and ran, past Bennet, past Tim, past Ruth, until, at last



Katie stopped in surprise

There, beside her snowchild, was a snowman
It didn't have any eyes or a smile, either.



Poor thing, thought Katie,
once I've finished
my snowchild, I'll run
home for some
bits for you.

She put her basket down
and unpacked it
First the eyes and nose
Then Katie drew a smile with her finger



Next she put
a woolly hat on the
snowchild's head and
tenderly wrapped
a scarf around
his neck
Last of all, she patted
the snowchild, and
he seemed to
smile back.

"What a brilliant snowman," said a voice

Katie looked around and saw a small girl carrying a bag.

"Look, I've brought some yarn to make hair for mine," she said. "I'm going to call her Jenny, like me. What's yours called?"

"I'm calling him Snowchild because he's so small," said Katie.

"When I finish this one," said Jenny,

"let's make another one—together."

Katie's smile grew wider than her snowchild's.

"A snowdad," Katie said, laughing.

"And a snowmom," added Jenny.

"With some snowfriends," said Katie.

"Just like us," said Jenny.



By the time darkness fell,
the park was full of friends:
snowfriends, snowchildren,
real friends, and real
children who played
and laughed and
rolled in the snow.

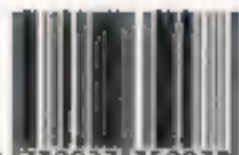


And Katie wasn't watching
from the sidelines.
She was there in the circle,
playing with her new friend.





“What a brilliant snowman,” said a voice.



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